

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 02073 231818Z
ACTION H-03

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R 231713Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1183
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: OREP (YATRON, GUS)
SUBJECT: CODEL YATRON

REF: A. PANAMA 1879; B. PANAMA 1914

1. CODEL YATRON FOLLOWED THE SCHEDULE SET FORTH IN THE REFERENCED CABLES. SINCE THE GROUP WAS IN PANAMA FOR ONLY TWO DAYS, A FRIDAY AND A SATURDAY, THE SCHEDULE WAS VERY TIGHT, WITH LITTLE TIME FOR RELAXATION OR SPECIAL SCHEDULING.

2. THOUGH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS REACTED DIFFERENTLY TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THE SCHEDULE, ON BALANCE THEY SEEMED TO BE FAIRLY WELL PLEASED WITH THE PROGRAM. IT GAVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAMPLE OPINION ON THE CANAL TREATY PROBLEM FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT ANGLES (THE EMBASSY, SOUTHCOM, PANCANAL, THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT, THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY, PRIVATE PANAMANIAN OF VARIOUS SHADES OF OPINION AND AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF THE CANAL ZONE). PERHAPS THE GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THE GROUP WAS ITS INABILITY TO MEET WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS. TORRIJOS WAS INVITED TO THE RECEPTION GIVEN BY FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALEZ-REVILLA THE EVENING OF

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 02073 231818Z

MARCH 19. HE SHOWED UP AT THE HOUSE WHERE THE PARTY WAS BEING HELD SOME 45 MINUTES AFTER THE CONGREEMEN HAD RETURNED TO THEIR HOTEL.

3. IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO WORKED WITH THE CONGRESSMEN THAT THE VISIT GAVE ALL OF THE MEMBERS A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES

INVOLVED IN THE CANAL PROBLEM. WITH SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND, ABOVE ALL, EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FROM PRESIDENT CARTER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION, SEVERAL OF THE MEMBERS CAN PROBABLY BE BROUGHT TO SUPPORT A TREATY WHICH PROTECTS FUNDAMENTAL AMERICAN INTERESTS.

4. THE EMBASSY ASSIGNED AN ESCORT OFFICER TO EACH CONGRESSMAN, AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH GAVE GREATER FLEXIBILITY FOR SCHEDULING INDIVIDUAL CONGRESSMEN AS WELL AS FREQUENT CONTACT BETWEEN THE MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUALS FAMILIAR WITH THE ISSUES. THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS A SUCCESS IN THOUGH THE EMBASSY WILL REFINE IT IN VARIOUS WAYS IF THERE SHOULD BE OTHER LARGE CONGRESSIONAL GROUPS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. THE EMBASSY'S JOB WAS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY THE BREVITY OF THE VISIT AND BY THE RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND STAFFERS. WE RECOGNIZE, HOWEVER, THAT THE DEPARTMENT OFTEN HAS LITTLE OR NO CONTROL OVER THESE MATTERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR JOB WOULD BE FACILITATED IF THE DEPARTMENT COULD DISCUSS THE PROPOSED SCHEDULES WITH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE FROM WASHINGTON. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE OF THE MEMBERS WAS VERY UNHAPPY WITH THE PROPOSED SCHEDULE AND WANTED TO DO THINGS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE PROPOSED BY THE EMBASSY. BECAUSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL ESCORT OFFICER ARRANGEMENT, WE WERE ABLE TO PARTIALLY ACCOMMODATE HIS INTERESTS. BUT WE COULD HAVE SERVED THE CONGRESSMAN BETTER IF WE HAD HAD ADVANCE NOTICE OF HIS DESIRES.

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 02073 231818Z

5. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CONGRESSIONAL VISITS ARE HIGHLY BENEFICIAL IN THAT THEY USUALLY DISPEL MYTHS ABOUT THE CANAL QUESTION BY PUTTING MEMBERS IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION ON THE SCENE.

JORDEN

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